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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 005370

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [OSCE](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: INITIAL GROUP OF RUSSIAN DUMA ELECTION OBSERVERS  
FROM ODIHR ARRIVE

REF: STATE 153123

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons: 1.4 (b, d).

Summary

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¶1. (C) Deputy Foreign Minister Yakovenko claimed to Ambassador November 12 that the GOR would invite the 70 ODIHR observers as it had promised and in the timeframe promised, and would expedite visa issuance. In a November 13 conversation (septel), Presidential Administration Deputy Vladislav Surkov expressed the same sentiments to the Ambassador. The Central Elections Commission (CEC) told us November 13 that several of the ODIHR observers have already arrived and that the CEC is currently reviewing an additional 10-15 applications for certification that it had received from ODIHR. ODIHR Mission Head, former Slovenian Foreign Minister Boris Frlec, arrived November 12 but will leave November 16 after meetings with representatives from the CEC and the Foreign Ministry. End summary.

¶2. (C) Ambassador made reftel demarche on November 12 to Deputy Foreign Minister Yakovenko and on November 13 to President Administration Deputy Vladislav Surkov, emphasizing U.S. concern about GOR limitations on OSCE election issues. Both expressed irritation at PACE and other public criticism of the GOR. but asserted that the GOR would invite the 70 ODIHR observers it had agreed to on the time table that it had set for their arrival, and provide the visas expeditiously. Publicly, the GOR took a harder line, accusing the OSCE in a November 13 MFA statement of attempting to politicize the invitations of foreign observers to elections, and noting that ODIHR had only recently requested accreditation for election monitoring.

¶3. (SBU) Andrey Davydov, Director of the International Relations Department at the CEC told us November 13 that four members of the ODIHR observer team for the December 2 Russian Duma elections have already arrived and that the CEC is currently reviewing an additional 10 - 15 applications for certification that it had received from ODIHR. Davydov said that he expected no problems with the applications. Once the CEC had approved the applications, the MFA would be informed and the MFA, in turn, would tell the appropriate Russian Embassy abroad to issue the visa.

¶4. (SBU) With the initial group of observers is the head of the ODIHR Mission, former Slovenian Foreign Minister Boris Frlec. The Slovenian Embassy in Moscow confirmed that Frlec had arrived November 12 and would stay until November 16. During his initial short stay, Frlec was planning consultations with CEC and Foreign Ministry representatives.  
BURNS